

FBC Delaware Shore Weekend

May 18 – 20, 2018

The weekend forecast was looking bleak to say the least – stormy, heavy rains, and flash floods – but birders are not known to be intimidated by bad weather conditions, so three FBC members (Brenda, Scott, Sally) set out Friday morning for the drive to Delaware City. As we approached the American Bird Association headquarters, we spotted our first checklist worthy bird of the trip – 17 Cattle Egrets in a wet agricultural field.



Heading south, the rain had stopped so we visited the Ashton Tract of Augustine Nature Preserve and spent a couple of productive hours walking the short trail tallying 36 species. Highlights here included a mixed warbler flock – Black and White, Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Blackpoll, and the first of many Common Yellowthroats. We also had 2 pairs of Wood Ducks, 4 Little Blue Herons, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager and a Hairy Woodpecker - all species we did not encounter for the rest of the weekend. We then drove to

Dover and found our Air B&B before heading out to meet Paul and Heidi for dinner at the Brickworks Brewery.

Saturday morning we woke to more rain, nevertheless we were up and ready to head out by 7:00am. We drove to Port Mahon Road for low tide but, as Paul had warned us the night before, where there used to be good beach habitat for shorebirds man, in all his wisdom, has replaced with riprap. No birds, driving rain, and water flooding the road, we turned around and drove to Bombay Hook. With the continued steady rain we stayed in the car and drove the loop past Raymond, Shearneck, and Big Bear Swamp ponds. Even at low tide, the ponds were full after days of heavy rain and shorebird numbers were low. However, despite the rain, wind, and birding from the car through steamed up windows, we were able to double our species count. Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks, Eastern Kingbirds, and American Goldfinch were abundant.





Next we drove to the DuPont Nature Center and, as luck would have it, the rain ceased and we were able to get our scopes out for the first time. Here we enjoyed a wondrous spectacle of feasting shorebirds. Large numbers of Ruddy Turnstones, Short-billed Dowitchers, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Dunlin, and good numbers of our target bird - Red Knots - were thick on the far shore and putting up in large swirling flocks. Yea! It was such an incredible scene watching the swirling flocks busy eating Horseshoe Crab eggs we

spent a couple of hours and ate our lunch while sitting on a bench at the center.

Next, we decided to drive south to Cape Henlopen State Park where a White-winged Scoter had been seen that morning. We drove through more rain but again it let up as we arrived. We walked down to the beach where part is roped off for nesting Piping Plovers. Unfortunately, we found none but we did pick up a few more Red Knots, a male Surf Scoter sitting on the beach, two Common Loons in breeding plumage, four Red-breasted Mergansers, three Least Terns, and two White-winged Scoters among other species we already had for the trip.

Our next stop was Prime Hook Visitor Center and the boardwalk. As we arrived the rain came down hard again. We sat in the car deciding what to do. Driving out we noticed some Canada Geese in a field with standing water – suspecting there may be other shorebirds we pulled over to take a look. It was filled with Black-bellied Plovers – we estimated between 500 and 1,000 - our first for the trip. We next took Prime Hook Road where we had a very cooperative Seaside Sparrow singing and perched high on a reed for several minutes while we checked our guidebooks. It was late afternoon by this time and again there was a break in the rain so we decided to continue birding. We took Cods End Road through to Fowler Beach Road which had been posted online as closed. There was standing water but we were able to drive through and pretty much had the road to ourselves. Scott got on an empidimax flycatcher that was not vocalizing and I managed a couple of out of focus photos. I posted them



on “What’s This Bird” facebook page and a young birder responded that he thought it was a Trail’s flycatcher. It was very birdy and we pulled in a few more trip birds staying till about 7:00pm. Driving back to Dover, Brenda checked trip advisor for a restaurant and found 33 West Alehouse and Grill in the old part of town. It was a casual local hangout with very good food and beer.

Sunday morning arrived with no rain! We packed up and left a bit before 7:00am to check out



Bombay Hook a second time without the rain. Driving around the ponds we picked up a few new trip birds, including Black-Crowned Night herons, Savannah Sparrow, Mute Swan, Blue Jay, Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, and our first Bluebird. We also heard a couple of Ovenbirds. A quick stop back at the visitor center was in order before walking the Boardwalk Trail over the salt marsh “aka Marsh Wren Trail.” We didn’t pick up any new species for the trip but we got great looks at several Marsh Wrens and their nests. We also got our second Magnolia and Black and

White Warblers for the trip and good looks at a signing White-eyed Vireo.

Scott had originally planned to end the trip at Abbots Mill Nature Park, but it was already 11:45am and we had 113 species so we decided to head home.



Species List

Canada Goose	Common Gallinule	Mourning Dove
Mute Swan	Black-necked Stilt	Chimney Swift
Wood Duck	American Oystercatcher	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Mallard	Black-bellied Plover	Red-bellied Woodpecker
American Black Duck	Killdeer	Downy Woodpecker
Surf Scoter	Ruddy Turnstone	Hairy Woodpecker
White-winged Scoter	Red Knot	Northern Flicker
Red-breasted Merganser	Stilt Sandpiper	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Ruddy Duck	Dunlin	Acadian Flycatcher
Northern Bobwhite	Least Sandpiper	Great-crested Flycatcher
Wild Turkey	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Eastern Kingbird
Common Loon	Short-billed Dowitcher	White-eyed Vireo
Double-crested Cormorant	Spotted Sandpiper	Red-eyed Vireo
Great Blue Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	Blue Jay
Great Egret	Willet	American Crow
Snowy Egret	Lesser Yellowlegs	Fish Crow
Little Blue Heron	Laughing Gull	Horned Lark
Cattle Egret	Ring-billed gull	Purple Martin
Green Heron	Herring Gull	Tree Swallow
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Great Black-backed Gull	Bank Swallow
Black Vulture	Least Tern	Barn Swallow
Turkey Vulture	Caspian Tern	Carolina Chickadee
Osprey	Forster's Tern	Tufted Titmouse
Bald Eagle	Black Skimmer	House Wren
Clapper Rail	Rock Pigeon	Marsh Wren

Carolina Wren

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Eastern Bluebird

American Robin

Gray Catbird

Brown Thrasher

Northern Mockingbird

European Starling

Cedar Waxwing

Ovenbird

Black-and-White Warbler

Common Yellowthroat

American Redstart

Northern Parula

Magnolia Warbler

Seaside Sparrow

Field Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Eastern Towhee

Scarlet Tanager

Northern Cardinal

Blue Grosbeak

Indigo Bunting

Orchard Oriole

Baltimore Oriole

Red-winged Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird

Common Grackle

Boat-tailed Grackle

American Goldfinch

House Sparrow

Photos by Sally Knight

#1 Cattle Egret

#2 Stilt Sandpiper

#3 Peeps

#4 Red-winged Blackbird

#5 March Wren

#6 Black Vulture

#7 Fox?